

Alzheimer's and Other Dementias

July 2012

WHAT IS ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE?

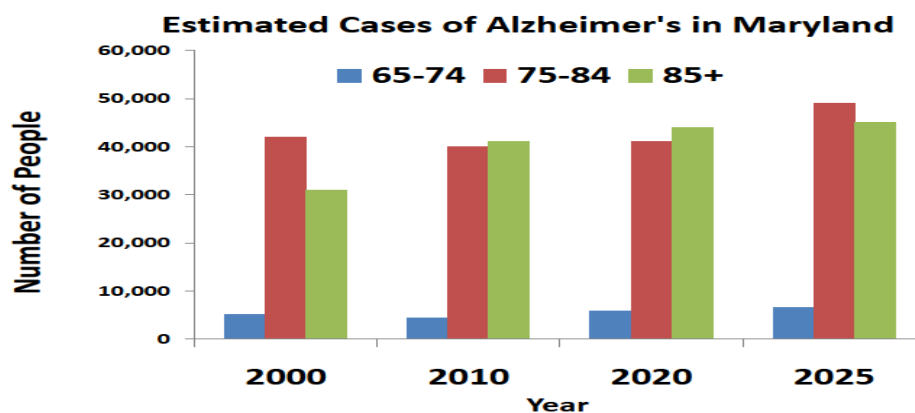
Dementia is a general term for the loss of memory and other mental abilities that interfere with daily life. It is caused by physical changes in the brain. Alzheimer's Disease is the most common form of dementia that causes memory loss and affects both thinking and behavior. Alzheimer's Disease accounts for 50 to 80 percent of all dementia cases.

Alzheimer's Disease worsens over time

The disease is progressive and symptoms develop gradually and worsen over time. In the early stages of the disease, memory loss is mild. In the later stages, individuals lose the ability to converse and respond to their environment. Alzheimer's Disease is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States.

No cure, but treatment options are available

There is currently no cure for Alzheimer's Disease. Treatment cannot stop the disease from progressing but it may temporarily slow the symptoms.



Source: Alzheimer's Association, 2011

WHAT ARE RISK FACTORS?

AGE

Advancing age is the greatest known risk factor for Alzheimer's. Most individuals diagnosed with the disease are age 65 or older. The likelihood of developing Alzheimer's disease doubles every five years after age 65.

FAMILY HISTORY

Individuals with a sibling or parent with Alzheimer's Disease are more likely to develop the disease. The risk of being diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease increases if more than one family member has the disease.

GENETICS

There are two types of genes that play a role in whether an individual develops a disease. Risk genes increase the likelihood of disease and deterministic genes directly cause a disease. Alzheimer's Disease has genes found in both categories.

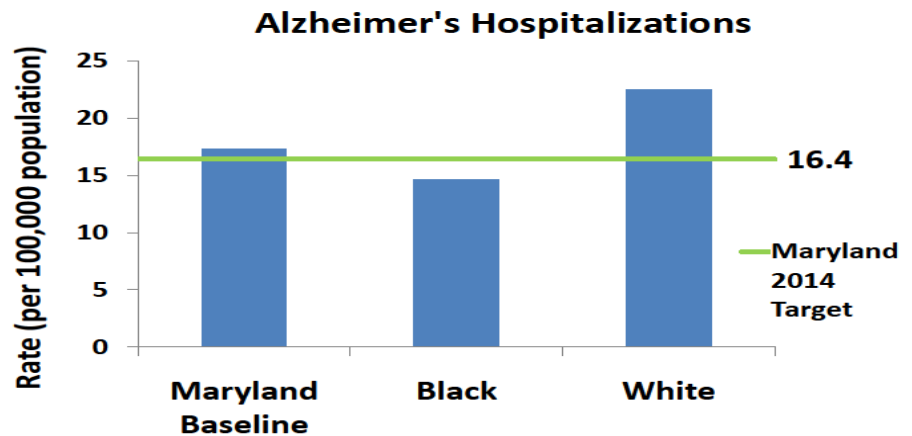
10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's

1. Memory Loss that Disrupts Daily Life
2. Challenges in Planning or Solving Problems
3. Difficulty Completing Familiar Tasks
4. Confusion with Time or Place
5. Trouble Understanding Visual Images and Spatial Relationships
6. New Problems with Writing or Speaking Words
7. Misplacing Things and Losing the Ability to Retrace Steps
8. Decreased or Poor Judgment
9. Withdrawal from Work or Social Activities
10. Changes in Mood and/ or Personality

Number of Deaths in Maryland Due to Alzheimer's Disease (Alzheimer's Association, 2007)

88 /

ALZHEIMER'S IN MARYLAND



Source: Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission, 2010

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

Diet

Recommended diets include a variation of fruits and green leafy vegetables high in antioxidants. It should include foods that contain omega-3 fatty acids like fish, nuts and seeds. Also consume whole grains and legumes for a balanced diet.

Exercise

Regular exercise reduces the risk of developing cardiovascular diseases which have been linked to an increased risk of Alzheimer's disease. Exercise also improves mental fitness by releasing stress.

Practice Heart Health

The brain is nourished by blood vessels from the heart. The risk of developing Alzheimer's is increased by heart conditions that damage the heart.

Be Safe

There may be a link between head trauma and risk of Alzheimer's disease. Protect your brain by wearing a helmet while playing sports, buckling your seatbelt, and fall proofing your home.

Keep Your Mind Active

Research suggests that staying mentally active may help to preserve cognitive functioning. Reading challenging books, learning a musical instrument, studying a new language will build cognitive reserves and may slow symptoms of dementia.

SHIP RESOURCES

Alzheimer's Association <http://www.alz.org/>

Alzheimer's Association, Greater Maryland Chapter <http://www.alz.org/maryland/>

Alzheimer's Disease Education and Referral Center <http://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers>

DHMH, State Health Improvement Process <http://dhmh.maryland.gov/ship/visions/vision5/obj35.html>

Eldercare Locator <http://www.eldercare.gov/>

Maryland Attorney General, Policy Study on Alzheimer's Disease Care <http://www.oag.state.md.us/healthpol/alzheimers.htm>

Maryland State Department of Aging Alzheimer's Foundation of America <http://www.alzfdn.org/>

Maryland Access Point <http://www.marylandaccesspoint.info/>